Strategies of Implementing Multicultural Education: Insights from Bilingual Educators

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to explore bilingual educators' perceptions of their strategies to maintain their cultural and religious identities within a multicultural society. This multiple case studies of three institutions employed semi-structured interviews and documents. The research question guides this study: What are strategies that have been utilized within the institutions, to further the aims of multicultural education? The data in this study was analyzed thematically via NVivo Qualitative data analysis. The finding of this study showed that the institutions were committed to providing a public education alongside a multicultural education – respect for other religions, ethnicities, and cultures. These institutions have a strong commitment to their spiritual purpose and maintenance of their respective religious and cultural identities. The findings of this study have implications for the understanding of similar programs and the ways to preserve cultural and religious identities within educational contexts. Most studies of multicultural education have been conducted in public institutions resulting in little information on how ethnic institutions promote cultural and religious identities within their institutions and communities. This research contributes to the body of literature that examines the promotion of cultural and religious identities in ethnic institutions.

Keywords: Ethnic institutions; multicultural education, identities

Introduction

Multiculturalism and multicultural education are of great interest among scholars and researchers in education. Some scholars have indicated that multiculturalism is a unifying force that emphasizes on social harmony (Keddie, 2014). Similarly, Multiculturalism is also a form of

social justice (Moran, 2017). The multicultural values are realized through multicultural education practices. Urbina and Cullen (2000) indicate that multicultural education relates to "the [inclusive] institution environment, teaching approaches and cultural experiences contributed to the participants' educational confidence and success" (p. 16). These scholars indicated that multiculturalism and multicultural education are part of the essential issues that have to be appropriately addressed to create respect, tolerance, and harmony among diverse communities.

Research in multicultural education has been conducted in many different areas of education. For example, cultural diversity competence (Holmes & Cooper, 2004), intercultural competence (Xu, Hao, and Huennekens, 2016; Reynolds, 2014), intercultural competence in higher education (Deardorff, 2011) and approaches of multicultural education (Tabatadze, 2015). Most of these studies focused on multicultural education within public educational contexts. The research conducted within ethnic institutions has paid little attention. As a consequence, very little information was related multicultural education particularly in the issues of cultural and religious identities within ethnic institutions. Ethnic institutions function as "the continuity of ethnic identity through maintenance of the language and other cultural activities" (Commonwealth of Australia [CoA], 1999). Regarding teachers' perspective, ethnic institutions aim to "to teach the community language, teach the cultural heritage of the students, help preserve the culture, and assist the family communication" (CoA, 1999, p. 5). For this paper, ethnic institutions refer to the institutions which maintain national culture on the one hand, and preserve their cultures of origins on the others.

Therefore, this paper aims to explore bilingual educators' perspectives of how ethnic institutions are maintaining the cultural and religious backgrounds of their communities. This research paper contributes to better understanding of multicultural education within multi-ethnic and multicultural communities.

Literature review

Historically, the introduction of multicultural education in the early 1970s was a necessary response to of the fact that with mass migration since the mid-50s, Australia had become a multiethnic society. According to Goldman that the growing population of migrants' children whose first language other than English was the main reason to introduce multicultural education (Taylor, 1997). The second reason was to reject the concept of assimilation which disadvantages migrant population educationally and politically (National Advisory and Coordinating Committee on Multicultural Education [NACCME], 1987). The other reason was that multicultural education was a political strategy to unify and to establish harmony in multi- background, multilanguage, and multicultural of Australia community (Office of Multicultural Affairs [OMA], 1992).

As a multiethnic country, Australia consists of people who were born in this country (including the indigenous population) and overseas (OMA, 1992). Migrants coming from different parts of the world are abundant in the state. In the 1960s, migrant children who constitute up to 25 % of the Australian population whose first language other than English were growing beyond the capacity of staffing. Therefore, this made teachers in institutions have difficulty in dealing with them. A survey in Victoria in 1967, for example, showed that 68 state institutions had a one third migrant children and at least 1,170 students were unable to speak English properly (Hill & Allan, 2004).

In the early 1970s, the Australian government launched a program to address the problem of migrant children. This basic program was Child Migrant Education Program [CMEP] that comprised short training courses, funding for teachers, and language laboratories. The most

significant approach was Teaching English as a Second Language TESL). At this period, the federal government introduced a multicultural policy which rejected the assimilation paradigm (Hill & Allan, 2004). Grassby, the former minister for immigration, summarized the new philosophy: "We are not talking about 'migrant' children. We are talking about Australian children from many different backgrounds. Indeed, it is irrelevant to speak of migrant education. What we are really talking about is the education of all children to fit them for a life in a multicultural and polytechnic society" (Hill & Allan, 2004, p. 985).

The publication of the Galbally Report in 1978 entitling Migrant Services and Program contains a concept of valuing cultural and linguistic diversity within a context of unity known as multiculturalism The Galbally Report viewed institutions as critical in the creation of a climate in which the concept of multiculturalism could be understood and promoted. By the early 1980s, all Australian states had adopted multicultural education as a policy for all Australian not only for migrant children (Department of Education Victoria, 1997). The recognition of multiculturalism for all Australians documented by NACCME below:

> The recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity, respect for and valuing cultural differences, the promotion of better understanding among members of diverse socio-cultural groups and fostering of harmonious relations and social interaction were broadly seen as crucial objectives of intercultural education within a mainstream approach to curriculum development. The multicultural perspective was seen as permeating the whole curriculum and not intended as a separate subject (NACCME, 1987, p. 16).

The emphasis was on the improvement of interaction and appreciation of other cultures, and cohesion in Australian multicultural society. However, each Australian state had its own policy on multicultural education. For example, New South Wales as the state had released Multicultural Education Policy Statement in 1983 as a basis multicultural education framework for institutions. This policy aims to accommodate the need for diversity in NSW institution context. In 1984, the Commonwealth Institutions Commission reviewed the multicultural education concept at the institutions level. The Commonwealth Institution Commission concludes, "the institutions level much need to be done to facilitate the implementation of high-quality program and to improve the capacity of teachers to understand the multicultural perspective in education in the aspect of educating all children about tolerance, harmony, and intercultural understanding" (Commonwealth School Commission [CSC], 1983). As a response to the Commonwealth School Commission report, concurrently with the changing of the social, economic, and political conditions the government abolished Migrant Education Program (NACCME, 1987, p. 16). However, in the latest 1980s, the government launched a new approach to multicultural education. The new approach to multicultural education for all Australian has been documented in Multicultural for Australians and Education for Multicultural Society. The approach of this concept is: "The approach of multicultural education is to develop acceptance, appreciation, and enjoyment of cultural diversity by learning, interaction, and the acquisition of positive attitudes and values. Program of intercultural education, attitudinal change, and community relations are designed to lead to equality of respect and, in the long term, a more cohesive, tolerant and understanding society" (NACCME, 1987, p. 17).

In Victoria, multicultural education has become a progressive policy in education. For example, in 1997, the State Government of Victoria launched its multicultural education policy, documented in Multicultural Policy for institutions and Guidelines for Managing Cultural and

Linguistic in institutions. Ninnes that the discourse of cultural diversity in the Science Syllabus of New South Wales junior secondary institutions "invites the science teacher to engage with cultural issues as a means of enhancing science learning. An implication is that enhanced science learning will lead to enhancing educational outcomes and social empowerment and presumably enhanced future economic opportunities" (2004, p. 261). Recent research on multiculturalism in Institution coincides with the current debates on multicultural education in Muslim institutions suggest a need to explore the institutions' commitments and visions, and challenges in implementing multicultural perspective in the Institution context.

Bilingual institutions

Ethnic institutions are the instruments of encouraging the values of multicultural education in institutions such as equality and tolerance. An early research (Kringas & Lewins, 1980) suggest that ethnic institutions were not only promoting multiculturalism by perpetuating ethnic language, but also promoting ethnic equality by means of such processes as making Australians more aware and tolerant at different ethnic minorities. This suggests that ethnic institutions support strong harmonious values and intercultural beliefs among students from diverse backgrounds.

Ethnic institution is related to institutions that offer not only language programs but also maintain culturally and identify backgrounds (Department for Education and Child Development, 2017). The example of linguistic maintenance in Australia is the teaching of a language other than English (LOTE), for example, Italian, Japanese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Mandarin. A study conducted by Hones (2005) recommends that LOTE is essential to be taught in the institutions because it is a part of bilingual/bicultural and multicultural education, which endorses an understanding of other culture and language

Methodology

Research Design

This present study was a multiple case study (Yin, 2009) of institutions' strategies of three ethnic institutions that have been developed to meet the challenge of multicultural education. This multiple case study was appropriate because it investigated the phenomenon in three different educational institutions.

Data collection instruments

The data were collected from all three sites by using a variety of techniques including the collection of information from documents and interviews (semi-structured interview questions are attached). The first researcher conducted the fieldwork in three institutions. The semi-structured interviews were three bilingual educators from three secondary institutions. Bilingual educator's ages were between the 40s and 50s, one with doctoral qualification (Institution A), and the others with a bachelor (Institution B) and master qualification (Institution C). All interviews transcripts were sent back to participants for clarification and more suggestions on contents. This process enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the research (Sarantakos, 1998).

The Institutions were selected as a purposeful sample (Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2013) by the first researcher interest in exploring a variety of institutions with different ethnic orientations. Secondly, they were chosen as a "convenience sample" (Patton, 2001, p. 169) due to primary researcher needed to quickly locate institutions and bilingual educators who would be willing to participate.

Data analysis approach

For data analysis, researchers used an NVivo qualitative software (QSR International, 2014) to establish a systematic framework of cultural and religious identities appeared from institutions. In this approach, the interview transcripts were coded to find a frame of themes and issues that are common to the institutions and/or unique to one or some of the institutions.

Results
Strategies for maintaining cultural and religious identities

There are several approaches used by ethnic institutions in maintaining cultural and religious in their institutions including teaching religion and culture through formal curriculum; keeping their identities through religion and ritual observances and preserving their identities through cultural and religious celebrations.

Teaching religion and culture through the formal curriculum

Maintaining their cultures and religion through curriculum was done in three ways: as a core unit, as an elective unit, and as a form of cultural dialogue. As a core unit, for example, Institution A placed their cultures and religion as one of the core units in the institutional curriculum. The reason, the bilingual educator of Institution A, argued, why they placed as the core units were that "the Institution aims to provide comprehensive religion and cultures to students comprehensively." The bilingual educator further explained that "religious education aims to explore the institution of faith while sharing multi-faith experiences." This usually was conducted over three periods a week.

Religion and culture as the core units were also realized through informal education. The informal education is also a part of experiential learning, as bilingual educator of Institution A commented: "Informally, the institution runs experiential programs that the students can become involved in if they wish to. It's very high percentages of our students to involve themselves in the informal program offered by the college, the example is camping and community activities". Informal institution activity helps teachers to build life skills and promote students to understand each, particularly in the area of respecting the differences. As institution, A bilingual educator argued that "informal activities help shape students understanding to respect differences among them." It is interesting to note that this institution treats free activities as a bonding space for students who come from different backgrounds.

As part of informal education, religion was learned in the Institution and in the community. As the bilingual educator of Institution A explained that "in the overriding environment, we don't expect our students to be religious, it's not compulsory that they are religious, but it's compulsory they learn about it, not compulsory they practice what they learn. Obviously, we like it when they do practice, but it's not mandatory as it is in some other institutions". As an elective unit, such as in Institution B, culture and religion were elective units depending on students' preferences. As a non-core subject, religion and culture were not taught formally, and neither is any other religion. According to the bilingual educator of Institution B: "We have elective subjects in Year 9 and 10. This subject aims to teach students to understand other cultures and beliefs. Students learn other culture and religion through the elective subject; we do recognize that we are different, but we are the same regarding humanity, respecting, understanding, caring, and loving."

Unlike Institution A and B, Institution C taught religion as a form of dialogue. The bilingual educator of Institution A argued that "culture and religion were taught outside of Institution hours

that involve wider Institution communities." According to Institution C Document that "religion and cultural teaching was transferred through a series of dialogue either in Institution or in the community." The reason why this Institution chooses dialogue form, as bilingual educator of Institution C urged, because "they want to maintain their oral tradition. The oral tradition is also an important part of the religious teaching. Therefore, students are taught to understand the book [holy book] and to participate in oral prayers, reading and religious oral tradition".

Maintaining identity through religion and ritual observances

There were several ways of these three Institution to keep their characters including religious practices, the tradition of mass and morning prayer, and employing alumni. Regarding spiritual practice, this form cultural and religious preservations was mostly done through following their code of conduct that was realized in their daily lives. The bilingual educator of Institution A explained that "we are very much a multicultural Institution. We have about 44 different nationalities, and we have about 800 students. Now we are also multi-faith." The cultural and religious background reflected in the way of the Institution structured and operated. The bilingual educator of Institution A further stated that: "Our understanding is that we are mostly a Institution, and that means something about the way we conduct our education and the way we conduct our lives at Institution, but we are also very respectful of other people and their cultures." In morning prayers tradition, the institution motto was strongly promoted, which was "strength" and "kindness." This means that Institution A strong underpinning humanistic values that drove their mission and strategies within the Institution and broader communities.

The bilingual educator of Institution B also explained: "Our motto is strength and kindness, and we believe that the greatest way that you can help people is by showing a great deal of strength, being consistent, but also if people do something wrong then you need to show them the kindness and the strengths to help them to make judgment not doing that again". In this tradition, everybody regardless of their backgrounds participates in this activity, because the bilingual educator of Institution A argued that "everybody who comes and sees has to participate in the life of the Institution, and that means that when we have Mass. Everybody goes to mass tradition". It was also a responsibility of being a staff member in the Institution to go to mass tradition. It was unavoidable for all staff and students. It seems that going to mass tradition was required for all Institution communities so that they embedded in Institution tradition.

Institution C had also unique way to maintain their culture and religious backgrounds that were through employing alumni. The bilingual educator of Institution C indicated: "We have about three or four teachers now, who are actually previous students who have gone away gone to Uni [university] and then they come back so that they are perfect model now, because actually, they not only understand our heritage and tradition, but also they understand our core religious education which is really different from the other Institution down the road who may be founded by different orders". They employ alumni not only as a staff member but also as volunteers at some Institution activities. For example, when the Institution had professional development programs and community events at Institution. The reason for employing alumni was due to that "they emerged in that culture, what we would do is that we don't give them extra support and extra training to join our team." Also, the other reason, according to Institution C bilingual educator, was that "they have had an idea of what it means of working in this institutions and understand code of conduct in the Institution, as well as the philosophy and the tradition of the Institution." What has shown in this Institution was that alumni were an essential part of the Institution who has personal and professional connections with the culture of an institution.

Preserving identities through cultural and religious celebrations

Celebrating and participating in festivals were done some celebrations organized by Institution, community, and state. The bilingual educator of Institution A said:" When there is an important day to be celebrated such as festivals, students celebrate that day regardless of their backgrounds, they share and involve in those activities. We also celebrate children's festival on 23 April each year where every child becomes very important because they are children. Students from other institutions regardless of their cultural backgrounds are invited to this festival. Students from different cultures, different beliefs will come to perform their cultural things such as folk dances, songs, sports. There is a promotion of multiculturalism within those activities". Celebrating cultural festivals seemed one of the critical ways to further promote and foster diverse cultural, ethnics and religious backgrounds in a multicultural ethnic community.

To maintain the tradition, Institution B regularly participate in religious and cultural festivals. As bilingual educator of the Institution B described that "we would have the class to choose and we have religious in each a new level, we will have Reflection Days, and we will have and celebrate participates at any religious and cultural festivals so that others can recognize as well." Also, the Institution recognized the importance of festival and religious commemoration that involved students and staff. The bilingual educator of Institution B described that "we would celebrate Ash Wednesday as the beginning of the Lenten Season, we would do a traditional symbol of that which is to put ashes on each student that will part of the homeroom to make sure that every student participates in that particular due on that day."

These institutions have emphasized that their students can show their identity through the participation in cultural festival in broader community. These cultural festivals were managed not only by the Institution but also by local council and state. For example, the leader of Institution B indicated "in every religious day, we prepare our students to understand the significance of each ritual and certainly to know how to participate and to understand the religious services. They celebrate the festival with their families at home. We prepare them for it so that they are competent and knowledgeable". In a similar line, the emphasis on developing pride on identity was reminded by the bilingual educator of Institution C commented: "I guess we develop proud in the college by celebrating our identity, by celebrating our culture, certainly by running rigorous curriculum initiatives in the area we think it is necessary… we espouse values as part of our philosophy and as part of our curriculum design, and we also celebrate the successors of the college in just every aspect imaginable from academic success to sporting success, our success in the area of community involvement and environment, success in the area of recognition of excellence". This indicated that participating in cultural festivals had two functions: one was to show their identities to outsiders, and the other was to strengthening their identities internally.

Constraints in maintaining cultural and religious identities

There were two practical constraints faced by ethnic institutions: anti-semitic comments and taught own cultural backgrounds to students. The anti-semitic remarks related to the comments that against the particular institutions or ethnics which tend less popularize the institutions. The anti-semitic comments from students from another Institution especially occurred in sporting events. In these events, the spectators from opposition team sometimes welcome or greet students by using anti-semitic remarks, as the bilingual educator of Institution C explained below: "I think it's part and parcel of growing up in global era or if you are identifiable on the occasion where we

felt that it's more widespread than just individuals for example on some sporting events, I think, whole team and spectators will use anti-semitic comments to welcome or greet us".

Teaching students their cultural backgrounds were another constraints of ethnic institutions. The reason was due to values and cultural differences of their personal and national cultures. The students' cultural values especially those who come from other than Anglo Celtic culture has very different values on education. The bilingual educator of institution A: "It is also tough for students to teach such culture of respect, and culture of tolerance, and how to communicate with others. It is straightforward to pass the knowledge to students, but it's not easy to say that they have learned it and understood it and even practiced it. Our staff is working very hard on that as a goal for the long run. Teaching students to behave positively and build a culture of respect takes time and patience. The other students who grow up from different ethnicities whose mother tongue other than English may encounter a similar problem in institutions." It is noted that the global cultures and rapid spread of advanced science and technologies can replace the cultures of origins when they do not provide benefits for their members.

Discussion

The analysis of the findings illustrated that several important things as indicated Table 1 below:

Table 1. Strategies of three institutions

Strategies	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C
Curriculum	As a core unit	As an elective unit	As a form of cultural dialogue
Religion	Religion practices as normal ones	Tradition of prayers	Employing alumni
Festival and celebration	Participating in historical festivals	Institutional and community festivals	Institutional and community festivals

The three institutions see themselves as having a role in religious education and preservation at the same time as teaching tolerance and understanding towards other religions. Religious activities are embedded in the institutions' life and culture. They seem to achieve a balance between cultural/religious approaches and multicultural approaches. These institutions celebrate cultural/religious festivals. The purpose of this was to maintain the cultural and religious identities of their students in a multicultural society. The three institutions aim to provide a balanced education on the one hand, and to provide religious education on the other. The religious education was conducted in two ways, which are formal and non-formal curriculum. This shows that these three institutions had strong commitment to providing a model for their students and communities in preserving their religious tradition.

It seems that all three institutions focused on building a harmonious multicultural society amongst the different cultures and communities represented at the Institution and within the local community. Also, all of the institutions, in different ways, are assisting students to maintain healthy, bicultural identities, mainly where there are students whose cultural and religious backgrounds are different from those of the majority. The three institutions were developing the cultural and religious characters of their students, preserving traditions, and at the same time, teaching tolerance and acceptance of difference and preparing their students in some ways to live in and build a harmonious multicultural society. In this way, they are balancing the potential

tension between cultural preservation and celebration of a multicultural society. Moreover, these three institutions focused on teaching humanist, democratic values of respect for all people no matter what backgrounds they are.

It appears that all of the institutions, in different ways, are assisting students to maintain healthy, bicultural identities. In other institutions where there are students whose cultural and religious backgrounds are different from those of the majority, students may find it difficult to maintain their cultural identities, especially if there is no specific recognition of their cultural backgrounds and identities.

Conclusion

In this article, it explored the policies underpinning multicultural approaches in each of three ethnic institutions and the strategies they utilize in each of them. All these institutions had more developed policies and more sophisticated strategy. In this context, these ethnic institutions foster cultural identity while firmly promoting a national culture which is seen as necessary in a multicultural milieu. For example, all of the institutions were able to give details about the challenges they faced in implementing their visions and policies in support of multicultural policies within communities. The institutions have shown their interest in bridging the differences among the students and the community through dialogue, preserving their cultural and identities, respecting the differences, and promoting tolerance and harmony in the context of the multicultural and multiethnic country.

This study suggests that the identification of cultural and religious identities can lead to the sustainable implementation of multicultural education practices within an institution and broader communities. The findings can inform educators and policymakers on making decisions the future of multicultural policy within ethnic institutions. For researchers, these findings can help the home countries of the investigators to establish multicultural and religious procedures within diverse Institution settings. Future research needs to explore not only from students' and teachers' perspectives but also from policymakers and community organization and religious leaders who are the primary stakeholders of the institutions to provide holistic aspects of cultural and religious identities. Future research also needs to be conducted within larger samples in multiple sites. Within various settings will contribute to a broader population and extends our findings by providing more comprehensive evidence to bolster the conclusions of this paper.

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